RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Quarterly

VOLUME 49 NO. 2 2019

A 50 Year Chronology Of The Rutland Historical Society

Early Historians

• Rev. Samuel Williams, editor of the Rutland Herald, published a two volume History of Vermont in 1794.

• Chauncey K. Williams, grandson of Samuel Williams, gathered unpublished notes for a history.

• Henry Hall researched local historical material from which he published a series on local historical topics in the Rutland Weekly Herald.

• James Davie Butler drew upon his memory and the papers of his father. Most of his work ended up in notes and addresses.

• Edward Purdy (E.P.), a Rutland Herald editor, frequently contributed commentaries on local history even after he left Rutland.

• In the late 19th Century Henry Clark assumed the role of local historian. He frequently wrote historical articles for the Rutland Daily Globe. His chapter in the History of Rutland County by Smith and Rann is still a primary source because he not only researched and wrote of the period but lived it.

• Mason Green produced a masterful history of Rutland and the Rutland Herald for the Rutland Herald for the 100th Anniversary of the Rutland Herald in 1894.

• F.E. Davison's Historical Rutland of 1911, which was the first to preserve historical photographs from the last half of the 19th Century, celebrated the 250th Anniversary of the charter of Rutland in 1761.

• Other than The Story of A Marble Town (1922) by David C. Gale and Old Rutland (1922) by Edward L. Temple, publication of Rutland History was only an occasional article.

Beginnings of Organized History

• 1870 – Rutland celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the first settlement of Rutland. The event was marked by four days of programs and exhibits. A Rutland Herald editorial noted that "We need in this town a good fireproof building in which to deposit ... mementoes of the fruitful past."

• 1881 – Rutland County Historical Society was established.

• 1961 – 200th Anniversary of the 1761 Charter of Rutland. The vacant Meldon School was filled with exhibits while in Main Street Park volunteers built a bicentennial village. This included a sugar house, blacksmith shop, and a country store.

• Despite the public interest exhibited, no historical society was created until 1969.

Birth of the Rutland Historical Society

• 1969 (Aug) – Initial home meeting

• 1969 (August 19, 1969) – Incorporated

• 1969 (September 10, 1969) – Constitution approved at public meeting at the Rutland Free Library.

• 1969 (November 17, 1969) - First slate of officers and directors approved.

• Board meetings held in the homes of Board members.

Search For A Home

• A petition to the Board of Aldermen to obtain the use of the Nickwackett Fire Station failed.

• In 1971 the small brick church recently occupied by the Seventh Day Adventists became for sale. This building had been built in 1825 as the first Bank of Rutland. The City of Rutland purchased the building "for the use of the Society." The Rutland Historical Society had its first home.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bank of Rutland built in 1825.
Was first bank in Rutland.

• In August 1972 the Society held a public open house with U.S. Senator Robert Stafford as the principal speaker.

U.S. Senator Stafford at opening of 101 Center Street.

Activities In The Early Years

• From October 1970 to 1972 the Society published three Newsletters per year. In April 1973 it became a Quarterly Newsletter and by the end of the year simply a Quarterly.

• 1976 – 1977 "Hypotenus To History" was a program involving students in a hypothetical march through southern Vermont with a student made cannon which was passed by student groups from school to school.

• 1976 – 1977 Society member took a lead in getting the State to establish a Vermont Republic license plate.

• In 1978 the Society published its first book. "Rutland in Retrospect" was a nearly 200 page picture history of Rutland.

• 1980s – Society focused on Quarterly publications for members from afar and topical history programs for local folks.

• 1983 – Annual Singalong programs in Center Street Alley.

• 1983 – Large Vermont map exhibit at the Thrall Chapel at Methodist Church.

• 1983 - American Association For State and Local History award for "Rutland in Retrospect" book published in 1978.

• 1985 - Engineer inspection of Society building places limits on building use. Repair cost is prohibitive. Society starts looking for larger quarters.

• 1986 – Society makes new overtures to acquire use of the Nickwackett Fire Station.

• 1988 – City votes to apply monies from sale of 101 Center Street building to rehabilitation of Nickwackett Fire House.

• 1989 (April) – Society moves out of 101 Center Street to allow City to sell it. Society material moved to Rutland County Courthouse storage room on third floor. (No elevator in that section).

• 1989 – Building Fund drive starts.

• 1989 – Building plans by member Clarence Whitney of Crandall Associates.

• 1989 – Building Committee selects Giancola Construction Company after interviewing a number of local firms. At the recommendation of Clarence Whitney a negotiated contract without a time certain completion date was advantageous in the cost of the project.

• Two large will bequests became available to the Society at a very fortuitous time which allowed the Building Committee to implement the full plans. Giancola Construction also saved the project about $25,000 by suggesting and implementing an alternate plan to the drainage field originally planned. (A fine dry basement floor was the result.)

• 1989 – Society joined the Loyalty Day Parade with a banner.

The 1990s

• 1990 – Brick at Nickwackett Fire Station being repointed

• 1990 – "Early Families of Rutland, Vermont" book published.

• 1991 –On 8 March Bicentennial Costume Ball at College of St. Joseph. This major event commemorated Vermont Statehood gained in 1791. Music for dancing was provided by the 18 piece Marble City Swing Band. The First Republic Brass provided music at the intermission.

• 1991 (July) – Renovation of Nickwackett Fire Station begins.

• 1991 (October) – Society held first board meeting at Nickwackett Fire Station.

• 1991 (December) – Society material had to be removed from Rutland County Courthouse by end of December.

• 1992 – "The History of Rutland, Vermont 1761 – 1861" book published.

• 1993 – Formal opening of new Rutland Historical Society home at 96 Center Street in the old Nickwackett Fire House on 18 July 1993.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mayor Wennberg cuts ribbon at 96 Center Street.

• 1994 - Society hosted Annual Meeting of the League of Local Historical Societies at the Grace Congregational Church on 30 April 1994.
• 1994 – (June) – First issue of new newsletter called "News From Nickwackett".
• 1994 – Society now has a MAC computer and a laser printer.
• 1994 – Exhibit "A Place Called Rutland".
• 1994 – A series of five weekly programs entitled "Our Town" planned for Fall at Fox Room of the Rutland Free Library.
• 1994 – New subscription policy that a mailing to a single same address may include co-resident as a member.
• 1994 (November) New exhibit entitled "Behind the Headlines" celebrated 200 years of the Rutland Herald.

• 1994 – Society improvements included purchase of computer and printer, lease of a copy machine, repair of slate roof, and installation of 3M film on inside of windows to limit sun effects and provide additional insulation effect.
• 1994 – Conditional transfer of Farm Museum to the Rutland County Agricultural Society. Ownership reverts to the Rutland Historical Society if there is no annual exhibit.
• 1994 – The Indian word "Nickwackett" means "place of the squirrel"
• 1995 – Mayor proclaims February 2 to 4 as Rutland Historical Society Days
• 1995 – Society develops a 90 minute special for PEG-TV Channel 15 as part of a promotional program.
• 1995 (April) New exhibit "Once Upon A Time ...."which presented lifestyles between the Civil War and the 1920s.
• 1995 – Construction of a horse-drawn trolley car for this year's Loyalty Day Parade. First Republic Brass will ride and play.
• 1995 – Fall exhibit was "Life of the Civil War Soldier". Six programs on the Civil War were developed. At the 27 September Civil War Music program President and Mrs. Lincoln (reenactors Robert and Janet Taylor) unexpectedly arrived at the program. (What a pleasant addition to the program.)
• 1995 – Rutland City School Registers (1899 – 1963) were donated from the school department, (1915 – 1919) are missing.
• 1996 – New exhibit on "The Formation of Proctor and West Rutland in 1886."
• 1996 – Morris Tucker reports that "Willy the Woodchuck" has been busy at the Fairgrounds unearthing complete bottles in good shape. We believe that his service to the Society should be noted.
• 1996 – A member has donated a number of metal file drawer units for use in the upstairs collections.
• 1996 – Basement flooded by sewer line backup. City was flushing lines. Accident was a onetime freak occurrence. Society suffered minimum loss but a maximum cleanup task.
• 1996 – Membership has grown to over 500.
• 1996 – New stationery designed by Sue Thomas.
• 1997 – Only small numbers come to the Society to view exhibits.
• 1997 - Exhibit Committee instead of a single theme exhibit will move to groups of smaller exhibits allowing the Committee to more frequently change the smaller exhibits.

• 1997 – Discussions of making more use of Channel 15 at PEG-TV.
• 1997 – Proposal to build a Police Station between the Historical Society and the Fire Station has caused concerns about the impact on the Society building. (Ultimate move to an existing downtown building made the issue moot.)
• 1997 – Society produced a half-hour program on the Flood of 1947.
• 1997 – Society paintings that were sent to St. Paul and Alyward for cleaning and restoration in Colorado have returned.
• 1997 – New window air conditioner was purchased for the main floor of the Society.
• 1997 – The Rutland Free Library has donated the uncatalogued manuscript portion of the Marvel Swan genealogical collection to the Society.
• 1997 -The G.A.R. windows have been repaired.
• 1997 – First year that the Society has participated in the Halloween Parade.
• 1998 - Vermont Historic Site marker commemorating the life of Martin Freeman, first black college professor in the U.S. was dedicated 25 April.
• 1998 – First free Friday night weekly dance series at the Godnick Center.(26 June to 21 August.)
• 1998 – City did painting and preservation work on the building exterior woodwork.
• 1998 – Second year in the Halloween Parade.
• 1998 – Society Quarterly and Newsletter to be mailed together in a single envelop.
• 1999 (June) – Society begins "Historically Speaking" programs on Channel 15 at PEG-TV.
• 1999 – Two computer gifts: Apple with scanner and computer monitor and printer.
• 1999 – Society holds 30th Celebration on 8 August. Program included Dedication of Julia Dorr, Vermont Historic Site Marker, First Republic Brass concert and Quarterly authors reception.
• 1999 – First Night Singalong at the new Rutland Railroad Station.

New Century 2000 And On

• 2000 – Providing a photo service to individuals and businesses that want to decorate with historic pictures.
• 2000 – Society started cataloging its collections using Past Perfect software in January

• 2000 - Student from Castleton State College was a volunteer at the Society for Spring semester.
• 2000 – Society participated in Vermont History 2000.
• 2001 – League of Local Historical Societies Annual Meeting was hosted in Rutland on 5 May by the Society.
• 2001 – Loyalty Day Parade: Recorded big band music with two high school students demonstrating swing dancing along the parade route.
• 2001 – Society summer dance programs moved to Saturday night.
• 2001 (October) – Society summer dance programs will be discontinued after four seasons. Average attendance dropped to less than 20. In the early 1950s big dance bands suffered a similar decline.
• 2001 (December) – Society again provided recorded music for First Night.
• 2002 – The Society prepared a collection of 48 images and frames representative of Rutland's history which were donated to the City and installed along the hallways at City Hall in March.
~~• 2002 – Society received prestigious Romeo Award from PEG-TV for "Historically Speaking" program as "best in show".~~
• 2002 - Society held a sale on Columbus Day weekend at the Society that produced over $1000.
• 2002 – A list of photo studio negatives from 1925 to 1935 that were recently received by the Society was published in "Sam;s Good News".
• 2002 – Fourth year the Society has provided music at First Night.
• 2003 – Society purchased an ELMO which is a visual presenter that allows the recording of sound and picture on VHS tape. The unit will be available for public use as well as for Society programs.
• 2003 – Central Air Conditioning installed in May.
• 2003 - Jim Davidson was interviewed by the History Channel in New York for a brief segment on the Frank Hopkins story.
• 2003 – Last Quarterly of the year will be a calendar.
• 2003 – Vice-President of the Society was named Vermont Teacher of the Year.
• 2003 – Fifth year that the Society has provided music at First Night.
• 2004 – Permanent exhibit "Eight Generations of Rutland's History" has been supplemented by the addition of numerous artifacts from each generation.
• 2004 – Six new shelving units have been added to the upstairs archival storage area.

• 2004 - The History Channel show on Frank Hopkins was aired on 4 March. Show included an 1880s view of Rutland and a pan of the Rutland Herald of the supposed week Hopkins arrived in Rutland.
• 2004 – The Paramount Theatre board of directors has decided to transfer its archives to the Society.
• 2994 - PEG-TV survey last year found "Historically Speaking" series was the most popular of Channel 15 programs.
• 2004 – Annual Meeting of the Society celebrated 35 years of accomplishments.
• 2004 – Society has nearly 600 members from 32 states.
• 2004 – A recent addition to the Society's collections are the Municipal Court Records of Rutland from the early 1870s to the 1960s.
• 2004 – Sale on Columbus Day weekend.
• 2004 – Society provided music for First Night for the 6th year.
• 2005 - Light pole of the 1950s from in front of McClallen's Drug Store is donated to the Society. This store was a youth hangout in the 1950s and many names were penciled on it including three who went on to earn Pulitzer prizes.
• 2005 – All glass plate collections have been printed. Progress is being made on computer cataloging of archival material.
• 2005 – Society website was unveiled on 14 February.
• 2005 – First History Days in Main Street Park.
• 2005 – Society exhibit at Vermont History Expo was chaired by a 29 year old member and a Civil War dramatic monologue was presented by a 19 year old.
• 2005 - Elwert Essay Contest offered.
• 2005 – Fall sale gained over $700.
• 2005 – Halloween Parade featured "vampires" and the theme "We want new blood".
• 2005 – Quantity clearance sale of back issues of Quarterly starting 15 December.
• 2005 – Website "hits" for the year are 56,000 with world-wide exposure.
• 2006 – Website is great success. February website one year anniversary showed 91,000 visitors in one year.
• 2006 – Poor attendance at live programs has moved the Society to a policy of responding to requests from local groups which pretty much guarantees a reasonable attendance. Programming on PEG-TV draws approximately 200 viewers.

• 2006 – Second Annual History Days.
• 2006 – Loyalty Day Parade introduced "Nickwackett Nick", the Society's new mascot.
• 2006 – Irish Roundtable programs
• 2006 – Music programs are now presented upon organization request.
• 2006 – Society has installed DSL for communication needs.
• 2006 – Bylaws changes were considered at Annual Meeting. No changes had been made since 1982. Most changes affected committee responsibilities.
• 2006 – Fall sale becoming a successful annual event.
• 2006 – A member donated two large safes to the Society.
• 2006 – The membership database is being moved from MAC to PC. Robert Perkins , new Membership Secretary, has developed a relatively simple database to meet Society needs.
• 2006 – League of Local Historical Societies has given the Society an award for its website development.
• 2006 – Third Annual Elwert Essay Contest.
• 2007 - Society music at First Night continues.
• 2007 – As of December 2006 the Society website reports over 250,000 visits.
• 2007 – On 24 May at its Annual Meeting PEG-TV awarded the Society its prestigious Romeo Award for "Historically Speaking".
• 2007 – PEG-TV will now be offering its programming over the internet.
• 2007 – Spring programs moved to Sunday afternoon to see if it would increase attendance. The Rutland Royals baseball roundtable drew 23. Attendance at other programs was poor. No time seems to be a good time for live programs.
• 2007 – Third History Days well attended.
• 2007 – "Nick" the Society squirrel mascot took his friend Carl, the Library dog mascot "on parade" at the Loyalty Day Parade.
• 2007 – Society produced a list of historic views for the Rutland Creek Walk that could be viewed from the Walk.
• 2007 – The Rutland Historical Society was selected to provide all the programming presentations for the Fall meeting of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences Fall Conference at the College of St. Joseph. This was a special honor to be so recognized by the Academy. Three members of the Society offered: (1) Evidence, today and tomorrow, (2) Evidence in the Business World and (3) A Case Study in Evidence. All was very well received.

• 2007 – After nearly 2 years a family identified the website mystery photo as their grandfather.
• 2007 had 340,000 visits to the website.
• 2007 – Jim Davidson was inducted into the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences on 22 September. He was honored for his involvement with the Rutland Historical Society.
• 2008 – "Historically Speaking" past episodes are now on the Society website
• 2008 – "The Talegators" played 1920s jazz as the Society presentation for the Loyalty Day Parade from the back of a pickup truck.
• 2008 – Two members of the Society scanned a five foot by five foot map of 1884 Rutland in sections which were put together with Photoshop. The result was put on a CD for sale.
• 2008 – The website reached its one millionth viewer on 12 September,
• 2008 - New collections are beginning to place a strain on Society storage space. An Expansion Committee has been appointed to explore solutions to this problem.
• 2009 – Carolynn Ranftle on a change in cataloging procedure in which she will catalog only files in a document box and not each piece of paper.
• 2009 - The committee exploring space issues has concluded that digitizing more of the Society collections was the most practical direction to go.
• 2009 – To celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Rutland Historical Society, the Annual Meeting program was devoted to where we have been, where we are now, and what the future holds for the Society.
• 2009 - Jim Davidson's nine part series "Notes from the Past" on Channel 21 is now completed.
• 2009 - New steel shelving for new materials has been received.
• 2009 – Carolynn Ranftle has worked for nearly a year to record all files from the document boxes into the Past Perfect cataloging program. She has then produced a three level report that is a Finding List to all document files and their location.
• 2009 – The Society has acquired the Margaret Jenks cemetery books for all Rutland County towns.
• 2010 – The "Early Families" book which is now out of print has been re-issued on CD.
• 2010 – Jim Davidson of the Society has been invited to produce weekly "Moments in History" for the weekly news magazine on Channel 15.

• 2010 – The website has been viewed by nearly 2,000,000.
• 2011 – The "History Detectives" TV program contacted the Society about a big stick that purportedly was given to Teddy Roosevelt during his 1912 campaign while in Rutland. The Society found evidence in the Rutland Herald that such a stick had been given after his speech. The TV program wanted to film the story in Rutland. The film crew arrived on 24 February. On Friday they spent all day filming on all three floors of the Society. The owner of the stick was flown to Rutland and was filmed at a member's house on Saturday. The investigation became a 20 minute episode on "History Detectives". (To view this episode: Go to Society website, select "videos", go to "History Detectives". The Roosevelt item is the middle of three.) The filming event was also covered by WCAX-TV and PEG-TV Channel 15 weekly Access program as great local news.
• 2011 – Society Finding List is now on Society website.
• 2011 – "Rutland In Retrospect" is now available on CD,
• 2011 - Society has developed a major Civil War exhibit.
• 2011 – Society has leased a copier/scanner and purchased a new computer.
• 2011 – Society received an IBM grant to purchase negative scanner.
• 2012 – Society received a grant of $1,000 from the Vermont Community Foundation.
• 2012 – Society entered a partnership with the Rutland Free Library to digitize local high school yearbooks.
• 2012 – Society hired the development of a digital Civil War sharpshooter computer game.
• 2013 – Yearbook digitization project is moving along rapidly. Rutland High School, Mount St. Joseph Academy, West Rutland High School, Proctor High School and Mill River High School are all scheduled to be scanned and placed online.
• 2013 – In 1996 Jim Davidson started bringing a monthly recorded music program in the name of the Society to the residents of Eden Park. After 17 years he has concluded the project. Jim found the project immensely personally rewarding.
• 2013 – The Society was involved in the installation of a Vermont Historic Sites marker honoring the life and accomplishments of George Schmitt, Rutland's first air pilot. The marker is located near the entrance to the Rutland Fairgrounds.

• 2013 – Society Treasurer presented an appeal for funds for a series of capital upgrades and replacements needed after 20 years in the Nickwackett Firehouse.
• 2014 – Society fund drive reported over $10,000 in donations.
• 2014 – Ben Burdge has produced a new virtual walking tour which can be seen on the Society website.
• 2014 - Society Fall sale produced over $1400.
• 2014 – Society Facebook page can be entered by link on the website.
• 2014 – The Society has digitized its complete collection of the Rutland Railroad company magazine called the Rutland Newsliner (1952 – 1960). A disc copy is available for $10.
• 2015 – The American Association For State and Local History awarded Jim Davidson a national leadership in history award for his involvement with the Rutland Historical Society. This is AASLH's highest distinction. Jim travelled to Louisville KY to receive the award. Jim comments that "the Rutland Historical Society is a team effort and the honor received by one is a reflection of the team. Without the team there is no glory."
• 2015 – Facilities repairs and improvements at the Society include: City had roof woodwork repaired and painted, Society had front doors refinished, new carpet tiles will replace old carpet, stairwell carpet is being replaced, internet and phone services are being consolidated with Comcast Business Services, but old phone number (775-2006) is retained.
• 2015 – Society member Bill Powers gave a presentation on Fred and Cassie Bacon of Forestdale to the 18th Annual Banjo Gathering in Baltimore MD on October 31st.
• 2016 – The Rutland Historical Society co-sponsored the Annual Meeting of the League of Local Historical Societies & Museums at Castleton University. The Society provided presenters for seven of the twelve sessions.
• 2018 – Society is weeding and cataloging its library books.
• 2018 – Chaffee-Smith Lumber Company records have been moved to UVM Special Collections.
• 2018 – Rutland Herald has donated a large collection of A.J. Marro photographs to the Society.
• 2018 – The Society opened its new website platform in July.
• 3018 – Society provided a full store exhibit for 4 August Rutland Street Party.

The Society At Age 50 (2019)

Celebration

• The second Quarterly of the year is a chronology of the first 50 years of the Society.
• The third Quarterly of the year is a photographic tour of the first 50 years of the Society.
• Open house celebrations of the first 50 years will be held on Saturday 7 September and Sunday 8 September from 1 to 4 each day.

Future

• President Chuck Piotrowski in a 2018 report to the Society commented on the greatest challenge to historical societies of the future:
"What will a government or business "record" look like in 20 years? Will the archives be able to collect and preserve electronically stored information? Will the historian be able to glean the marrow of history from these digital bones? The optimist inside of me says that all of this information will be a boon to historians in the future. For this to occur two things must happen. First, historians will have to adopt new methods of historical inquiry, both technical and intellectual. Finally, archives and historical societies will have to work extra hard to understand, if not embrace, new technology, fund appropriately for the necessary equipment and be prepared to stare at screens, rather than papers, for generations to come. In order for the future historian to succeed, today's historical societies must learn to collect and preserve information generated today. I am confident that we are up to the challenge!
• In 2014 Paul Carnahan, Vermont Historical Society Librarian commented that "the Rutland Historical Society really is way out ahead of other organizations in getting content digitized and online."
• From President Pam Johnson's 2015 President's Report: "Technology and digitization continue to be the heart of the Society's future.
• P[ease follow our dream for the next 50 years. It is only a few key strokes away on your computer which is available 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Presidents of the Rutland Historical Society

Frederic P. Elwert (1969-1970; 1972-1974)

James S. Davidson (1970-1972; 1982-1984; 1987-1990)

Arch J. Todd (1974-1977)

Robert E. West (1977-1979)

Sanborn Partridge (1979-1981)

Thomas K. Egan (1981-1982)

Eleanor J. Elwert (1984-1987;1990-1993)

Morris G. Tucker (1993-1995)

Donald Bordeau (1995-1996)

Elaine Purdy (1996-1999)

Helen Davidson (2000-2003)

Dorothy Whitford (2003-2006)

Michael Dwyer (2006-2007)

Chuck Piotrowski (2007-2010)

Carolynn Ranftle (2010-2013)

Pam Johnson (2013-2016)

Jake Sherman (2016-2019)

The *Quarterly* is published by the Rutland Historical Society, 96 Center Street, Rutland VT 05701-4023. Co-editors: Jim Davidson and Jacob Sherman. Copies are $2 each plus $1 per order. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to the *Quarterly* and the *Newsletter*. Copyright© 2019 The Rutland Historical Society, Inc. ISSN 0748-2493.